

Mettawa, IL – With the Illinois General Assembly skipping action on a capital bill after adjourning for the summer last Saturday, U.S. Representative Mark Kirk today outlined Illinois' dire transit future at the annual meeting of the Transportation Management Association (TMA) of Lake-Cook.

"When the Democrats and Republicans of the Illinois congressional delegation joined together to deliver the largest federal transportation authorization in the state's history, none of us ever imagined that three years later our state government would fail to approve a single matching dollar," Congressman Kirk said. "The planning process for the next transportation bill already has begun. Without any matching funds, it will be incredibly difficult for the Illinois congressional delegation to make the case in Washington for Illinois' transportation projects. States like Florida, California and New York are eagerly watching Illinois' political deadlock to capitalize on our inaction. We have an opportunity to jump-start our local economy through more than \$9 billion in federal matching funds for public transportation expansions and road improvements. Governor Blagojevich and Springfield legislators owe the citizens of Illinois an explanation why they are letting federal money go to other states due to their inaction."

Metra, CTA and Pace were authorized projects worth up to \$4 billion in federal transit dollars for congestion-fighting "new-start" projects, such as new rail lines and expansion improvements under the last federal transportation bill. In order to qualify for the full amount, the State must provide \$2.7 billion. Including matching highway funds, the total federal dollars at risk due to inaction in Springfield is \$9 billion.

Expansions of the UP West and Northwest lines, as well as construction for the new Suburban Transit Access Route (STAR Line) cannot proceed without a local match. Metra has stated that without funds this year, the STAR Line project will be canceled.

The loss of federal transportation funds is even more critical in light of recent reports indicating Illinois already lost federal-aid highway dollars because of legislation signed into law in 2006. A law allowing the transportation of open bottles of wine will cost Illinois 3 percent of its highway dollars, or about \$21.5 million for 2008.

"Illinois is at an economic crossroads," Congressman Kirk said. "With rising gas prices, car-choked streets and commutes lasting several hours, we can either expand and improve our

transportation infrastructure, or we can allow our economy to be overwhelmed by traffic gridlock and pollution. Illinois needs the jobs that a capital bill would create. To walk away from billions in federal funding is a case of policy malpractice.”

The TMA of Lake Cook has been actively involved in Cook and Lake Counties since 1989 to help improve employees’ commutes by working with area businesses, communities, transportation agencies and elected officials. Their activities include construction updates, public transit expansion initiatives and highway improvements.